

## **Value of the In-depth Interview Research Method**

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### **Abstract**

The in-depth interview can help researchers obtain a wealth of detail about a topic such as a person's first-hand knowledge of area, regional, national and international events. Uniquely, the in-depth interview research tool can prevent potential interference from social pressures affecting a subject's responses. During late October 2016 students in a research class in the Communication Arts Department explored the life of Dr. Carolyn Dirksen. A professor of English, Dirksen began employment with Lee University in 1968 and witnessed epic changes within and without this Christian institution associated with the Church of God denomination. Greene and her classmates used bibliographic instruction to develop questions on the decades of Dirksen's life including her youth in Arizona. In addition, the students studied Lee University yearbooks to develop questions about the university. The students revised their questions, vetted them with the campus Human and Animal Subjects Research Committee, showed the questions to Dirksen and practiced asking the questions in a TV studio setting. The students asked the questions over a two-day period in a TV studio with a three-camera set up and recorded the interview. Students created a transcript of the interview and each prepared a research report. Greene led the research team and prepared a research paper, which we hope will be archived in the campus library along with a DVD. This primary research explores the contributions of a woman who excelled in every aspect of the academy, from teaching to scholarship to collegiality. Greene's paper used a theory-based approach to understand the invaluable role of the in-depth interview in qualitative research. The research explores detailed background including the opinions, experiences and feelings of Dirksen. Through the use of the in-depth interview Dirksen was able to respond unhindered. The interview examined sensitive issues such as

politics, religion and the changing mores on college campuses. Despite the length of the interview, the subject handled the wide variety of questions with aplomb.

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## **Section I: Research Question**

What are the benefits that make the in-depth interview an invaluable qualitative research tool? This paper will explore how to conduct an in-depth interview and the benefits of this method of qualitative research.

To gain an understanding of in-depth interviews, research was conducted by Lee University's Public Relations and Advertising Research class. The students interviewed Dr. Carolyn Dirksen, a long standing professor who has been at Lee for 49 years. Through this research, strengths of the in-depth interview strategy were identified including preventing setbacks such as muted group theory and groupthink, while allowing for a trusted interaction between the interviewer and subject. Although there are other important strategies in research, the in-depth interview is specifically useful and unique, having strengths that are not found in alternative research methods.

## **Section II: Literature Review**

Through exploring the years of Dr. Dirksen's life, it was evident to the researchers that she has been a key component of Lee University's success. To conduct qualitative research an in-depth interview approach was used. "The purpose of an in-depth interview is to explore topics or issues in much more detail than that of a focus group" (Jugenheimer, Kelley, Hudson and Bradley, 2014, p. 83). An in-depth interview will allow the subject to fully express themselves. "In qualitative research, in-depth interviewing is an egalitarian approach to interviewing which develops research relationships and rapport with participants by focusing on the participant's experiences from their own perspective" (Beale, Cole, Hillege, McMaster, & Nagy, 2004, p.141).

Various theories exist to describe stumbling blocks for qualitative research strategies such as Muted Group Theory, the potential inability to maintain trusted subject-to-interviewer relationships, and the sample subject being considered too small; nonetheless the in-depth interview approach allows the researcher to probe deeply.

As an aid to understand Dr. Dirksen, this research explored Muted Group Theory, which has been described as being “based on the premise that the structures of daily life reflect the worldview of the dominant mainstream that, in turn, silences or renders invisible the position of non-dominant groups, particularly in the public sphere” (Allison, Hibbler, 2004, p.265). This theory has been applied to women regarding them as having less dominant roles in society, therefore being “muted” or less likely to be heard (Allison, Hibbler, 2004, p.265). As Dirksen was interviewed, the researchers attempted to observe her demeanor upon answering questions.

One concept that muted group theory discusses is “the question whether everyone in society has participated equally in the generation of ideas and their encoding into discourse” (George Mason University, 2005, p. 50). To prevent a research subject from not being fully heard because of their non-dominant characteristics, an in-depth interview is an ideal strategy. This type of research tool provides a situation in which one subject is fully heard without pressures from other places. An individual can remain silent upon pressure from peers. (Brecher, 2015, p.45). “IDIs offer the respondents time to share their feelings on a topic while also giving the interviewer time to establish a strong rapport with the respondent” (Jugenheimer, Kelley, Hudson and Bradley, 2014, p. 84).

The relationship built between the interviewer and the subject is also vital. In an academic journal article of *Nursing & Health Sciences*, research was conducted in Sydney Australia, where a team of researchers analyzed experiences that many interviewers had while conducting in-depth interviews on victims of tragic things like rape or close experiences to murder (Beale, Cole, Hillege, McMaster, Nagy, 2004, p. 144). The researchers saw similarities where the interviewer would consistently begin to experience issues like headaches, sleepless nights or stomach issues similar to what the victims were experiencing themselves.

After this analysis, they had an interviewer speak with more than 20 different parents with children that had eating disorders. During the process the interviewer said, “When I go and interview people, I explain the background and why it’s really important, why the team came up with this project. Because, I think that that’s not only true, but it also builds enormous trust” (Beale, Cole, Hillege, McMaster, Nagy, 2004, p. 144). The research team emphasize the importance of validating the interviewer’s feelings and the experience that was endured by them (Beale, Cole, Hillege, McMaster, & Nagy, 2004, 143-146). This example shows that a strong interviewer-to-subject relationship can impact the quality of real data that is collected. If a subject feels respected, understood and empathized with, his or her responses will be higher quality.

### **Section III: Methodology**

Before being able to perform this interview there were many steps of preparation that were taken. When Dr. Michael Ray Smith proposed the idea of this interview with Dr. Carolyn Dirksen, she came into Lee University's Public Relations and Advertising Research class during a lecture so the process could be briefly discussed. She spoke concisely about herself, allowing Dr. Smith to explain how the interview would work. Research began in mid-October. With assistance from the library staff, almanacs and "Vindagua" yearbooks were located to uncover many years of history and news events at Lee University, nationally and worldwide. Small groups researched to craft relevant interview questions that would give Dr. Dirksen context and spark memories and emotional responses from the past.

After the research questions were drafted, continued revision took place to form them into one complete script by Dr. Smith. Prior to submitting the questions to Dr. Dirksen for approval, the questions had to be approved by the campus Human and Animal Subjects Research Committee. After this step, Dr. Dirksen got a chance to go through the questions and decide if she wanted to omit any of them. She chose to keep all of the questions. To prepare for the interview, the students used class time to explore the studio where the interview would be conducted and recorded in order to familiarize themselves. The class was warned that the interview would be recorded in one straight take, so it was vital to be prepared.

Having two separate days planned for the in-depth interview recording, the first day, October 19<sup>th</sup>, began with a brief synopsis of what the interview would include and a history of Dr. Dirksen's time at Lee University. After this introduction, questions were



asked beginning in the 1950s. Students took turns asking questions while Dr. Dirksen responded. The second day, October 24<sup>th</sup>, was similar as a second set of students continued to ask her questions progressing through the decades to more recent years. As the interview developed, a few discrepancies could be seen where students missed their allotted times to ask questions, so a few were added during the recording process. The last question was added, giving Dr. Dirksen a chance to add any last piece of information that she may have wanted to. Dr. Dirksen was open and honest with the answers she delivered. She allowed herself to be vulnerable, even getting emotional as she spoke about her family and other matters close to her heart.

After the interview was completed, Dr. Smith sent two Vimeo links to all of the students of the complete recordings from the two days. With this recording available on demand, each student transcribed Dr. Dirksen's responses to the questions that they had asked. Julia Minucci, a student in the class, created a collaborative Google document including the script, so students could insert the portions that were transcribed. The researcher reviewed each student's questions to ensure accuracy of the final transcript.

Each student transcribed Dr. Dirksen's responses to the questions they asked. After this process, the final transcript was edited and sent to all students. Dr. Smith also emailed photos that were taken during the interview to the students as to be used to supplement the process of the in-depth interview.

## **Section IV: Findings**

Through the in-depth interview that was conducted, it is clear that the in-depth interview can be an essential tool in qualitative research. This type of research avoids issues that would prevent the subject from being fully heard such as Muted Group Theory, and gives the subject a trusted relationship with the interviewer promoting honest responses.

Through the conduction of Dr. Dirksen's in-depth interview, it became clear that this type of research tool allowed for her to be heard clearly. In Dr. Dirksen's case, she spoke freely and appeared not to be unduly influenced to edit her genuine sentiments.

This form of research also allowed Dr. Dirksen to build relationships with those interviewing her. Although multiple people interviewed her, which may have been a less conventional format, she was still able to work with students, some of which she had met before, and had been working with throughout the research process. This familiarity allowed for a more trusted relationship which provided more reliable responses to the questions she was asked.

This research style also allows for enough time and focus to prevent subjects from answering questions superficially. Unlike focus groups where a subject may only get 10 minutes to speak, (Jugenheimer, Kelley, Hudson and Bradley, p. 83, 2014) an in-depth interview allows the subject to expand on his or her feelings in a way that surpasses typical answers, and encourages them to tap into their true emotions, personal experiences and life reflections.

In-depth interviews are uniquely valuable because of their ability to provide responses that are unaffected by the opinions of others. As stated in the text *Advertising and Public Relations Research*, “In-depth interviews provide greater depth of information” (Jugenheimer, Kelley, Hudson and Bradley, 2014, p. 83). While all types of qualitative research are important, it is clear that there are specific benefits that make the in-depth interview an invaluable research tool including the prevention of Muted Group Theory.

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## Appendix I: Transcript

### Transcript of Dr. Carolyn Dirksen

**Amy Greene: Lee University president Paul Conn and Carolyn Dirksen have the distinction of being the longest serving members of the Lee faculty. My name is Amy Greene.**

And today students in the advertising and public relations research class of the Department of Communication Arts will explore campus life through the eyes of Dr. Dirksen. In the process, we will examine the years before she arrived and her thoughts on local, national and international events but always keep in mind the Lee University angle.

Here's a quick outline of the early days of Dr. Dirksen's Lee University work. Following this introduction, much of which Dr. Dirksen shared as part of Lee University's Celebration 2016 event, a number of students will pose questions for Dr. Dirksen's consideration.

Imagine the Lee College of the early 1970s--a school with just over 1,000 students all contained on a tiny campus with three academic buildings: Music, Science, and Everything else. The programs that now occupy the Education Building, the Humanities Center, the Communication Building and the School of Religion, were housed in the Walker Building. The entire College of Education was at the end of the hall on the third floor. Now imagine a small band of co-workers who gathered in the faculty lounge to get mail and have coffee, eat lunch and worshipped together in the same two or three local churches. Yet, despite its tiny size and apparent conservatism, Lee College, was in the process of dramatic transformation that would take it from Bible school to liberal arts college.

Now imagine a 20-something Paul Conn bursting onto that scene with his talented wife Darlia. He was brilliant and brash and fairly full of himself, and as a two-year veteran of the faculty, Dr. Dirksen said she was both intimidated and charmed, or in her words: "If you had been a wise outside observer, you would have said, either 'She'll never last,' or 'He'll never stay.'"

During President Charles W. Conn's 12-year administration, Dr. Dirksen flourished but by 1982 Lee went through the perfect storm financially. She said that the two years that followed were the worst of times with unimaginable belt tightening and draconian fiscal measures. Many faculty left, but Dr. Dirksen remained. In the transition from Bible school to liberal arts college, she said the faculty had created something extraordinary, something worth our best efforts to preserve.

In 1984, Lamar Vest became our president, and it was not entirely a surprise that he brought Dr. Paul Conn in as Vice President. In turn, Dr. Conn made Dr. Dirksen a department chair. In August 1986 Dr. Conn became president and Dr. Dirksen and the university continued to flourish. With that introduction, allow me to pose the first question.

**Amy Greene: In a few sentences, would you please tell us about life in the 1950s?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** Yes, the 1950s were in, in some ways a very idealistic time. There were, it was a time when people sort of knew their role. And people were coming back from World War 2 and there was general prosperity, so there was the GI bill that allowed people to go back to school and to, to build houses and start families. So on the one hand it was a very positive time, and I think it's a time that people look back on fondly as a, as a very good time in American history. On the other hand, the 1950s also had a dark side. And that was two things I think are important. One is that people were sort of pushed to converge at the mean. And so if you were a little bit outside the, the norm there wasn't really a place for you. It was a, it was difficult, so if you were a person of color or if you were not married or if you had no children or too many children, or if you were divorced, or if you didn't exactly fit the idealistic stereotype then you were very marginalized in that society. There wasn't, there wasn't much way to be integrated into society in that way.

And then also it was a time when there was this huge somewhat irrational fear of communist, and so there's almost this apprehension that a communist would be beating down your door and somehow taking over the government or taking over your family. Or whatever, so it was a, it was an idyllic time in one sense, but a little bit of a, with a little bit of a dark side.

**Apryl Jaye Raymond: Thank you. I'm Apryl, here is my first question. In the 1950s, women tended to stay at home with their children. Would you tell us about your family?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** Yes. Until 1957, my family was very typical. My Father had a white collar job, he was an assistant postmaster. My mother stayed home with us. She was one of those Donna Reed on steroids kind of homemakers. She made all our clothes, cooked, re upholstered the furniture and all those kinds of things; a very amazing homemaker. But in 1957 my father died, so after that my family was marginalized. So then my mom had to work and that was hard because she had a severe hearing loss. So there were not a lot of jobs open to women that she could do at that time. Because it was totally the norm for women not to work, there weren't many openings for women in professional jobs. So she worked in the kitchen in a hospital, which is hard manual labour. So at that point we got pushed a little bit to the margins.

**Apryl Jaye Raymond: Thank you for sharing that. My second question is the Vietnam conflict raged in the 1950s and it polarized the nation in the 1960s and early 70s. What can you tell us about those years nationally and at Lee College?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** I think we were not really aware of the Vietnam conflict until around 1964. That's when people started to be drafted and when it became part of the every day to day conversation. So at that time it became quite a difficult era. It introduced a lot of difficulty and a lot of conflict. In my high school class there were probably six or seven people who

were killed in Vietnam. The star of our class was a west point graduate who was killed. There was that and the draft made it really different because you really didn't have a choice. It wasn't like people enlisted. You had to get a high draft number or you had to get a student deferment or whatever. So there was a lot of conflict around that. At Lee, interestingly not many people are aware of this but the Church of God is historically a peace church. So because of that it is possible because of religious convictions to get a conscientious objector or deferment through the church or by using the church, going through the job force. There was a very small, maybe body of people who wanted to do that. So the whole country was polarized around whether it was a good war or a bad war, and even it is a bad war, should you do your duty to the country and go, or should you go to Canada or get a deferment or get a whatever. I would say that at Lee the vast majority of people were for the war. Maybe not thinking that it was a great idea, but supporting it because it was a national conflict. Then there was a small body of people who did not want to participate who were willing to take a conscientious objector route.

**Elisha Volland: I'm Elisha and it is my understanding that you have some pictures from your home in Arizona so would you mind sharing a few of those with us?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** Yea, I was born in a town on the Mexican border and this is the house I grew up in. This is me sitting on the porch, this is just a couple days ago with my two best friends from elementary school. So, it's quite an interesting town and it is, this is the border fence, it is just a couple of miles from the border. And we went across the border many many times shopping, sugar was cheaper across the line, and you could get your haircut cheaper, and there're dentist across the line. So it was a very natural thing to cross the border to get things done. Anyways, it's a mining town, it's really quite cute. This is the courthouse which is kind of famous for its big art deco court house. The town was mainly built in the early 1900's, it's kind of cute, kind of interesting.

**Elisha Volland: So I'm going to ask you some more questions about the 50's and to follow up on a comment that you made with Apryl about your father passing in 1957, the 50's was a pretty anti-feminist time as you had mentioned and during this time publications such as "Femininity Begins at Home" and "Cooking to Me is Poetry" so how did this kind of affect your family dynamic during that time?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** Well like I said, before 1957 my mother was kind of just the consummate homemaker. So she probably knew about those things, but I wouldn't say that she was doctrinaire. She wasn't a homemaker because she thought everyone should be, she just was because she was. That was the norm. But once she became a worker, once she joined the workforce, she was very much attuned to the whole idea of women's rights, and equal pay, and all of those things that you have to face when you get into the workplace. And so something kind of interesting, she was a shipfitter during the war, you know Rosie the riveter, she literally was a riveter. So when she went to get a job she knew welding, but at that point they wouldn't hire women as welders after the war. So, it's kind of like she could've had this great job, really high paying, but she couldn't because she was a woman. And so she didn't have an attitude, she was pretty sweet about the whole thing, but she was very much aware of discrimination against women in the workplace.

**Elisha Volland:** So kind of to switch gears a little bit about more discrimination, In 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court case of *Brown v. Board of Education* ruled that segregation of black and whites students in public classrooms was unconstitutional. Some extreme political groups would say they were Christian and considered segregation as the right policy. Do you recall any memories from this during your time in school?

**Dr. Dirksen:** Actually, because I'm from Arizona there really wasn't any segregation in Arizona. There was only one African American family in our town. They lived next door to my best friend, and the man worked with my mother in the hospital. So I really didn't experience that first hand. But it was very much still an issue when I came to Cleveland and so the schools were integrated but they hadn't been integrated very long and all the students I had at Lee were people who had gone to school in segregated schools and so I did kind of come into that confrontation and into that sort of unsettled stage right after integration when I came to Cleveland.

**Natalie Cremeans:** Thank you that is very interesting, I am Natalie and I have a few question about the 1960s. History reports that the first oral contraceptive was available in the United States in 1960. Do you recall the reaction of the church in general and Lee College in particular?

**Dr. Dirksen:** Okay, the church I think is always how I think it is, people are just along a continuum. Generally, it seemed that women in the church were relieved to be able to take a little bit more control over the size of the family and that sort of thing. But, I think on the other side people were very apprehensive that this would increase promiscuity, I guess that did actually happen. So there was that concern. I think for our denomination that I do not think there was ever a really big movement that you should not use contraceptives, not like the catholic church, I mean that there were individuals that felt that way. But, I do not think that was ever really a position of the church. And I was not at Lee until 1968 so I don't really remember and conversations about that except for feeling that it could lead to promiscuity.

**Natalie Cremeans:** Okay, also Malcolm X, Marilyn Monroe and Walt Disney died in the 1960s. Which one had the greatest impact on you? Please explain.

**Dr. Dirksen:** I love this question. I would have to say in my early years Walt Disney. Because my father believed that television was very educational. And so we were one of the first people in our town to have a tv. One of the first programs on television was Walt Disney World so we used to get to watch it and it was on after eight pm which is our bedtime, but we were allowed to stay up because this was such a great program so that was a big deal. And then when Walt Disney, when is Disneyland opened in Anaheim it became my family's goal to go there. So I used to get a dollar and twenty-five cents a week allowance and I would always put the twenty-five cents in my bank to save to go to Disneyland. So that was a big thing and we finally went and it was actually after my father died, my mother took us and it was a time when women weren't supposed to travel alone, but it was just, I have two sisters so it was my mother and my two sisters and I and we just decided we are going. And to get there from my home you actually had to cross death valley so it was kind of dramatic to do it, but anyway we went and it was wonderful. And



the other thing I would say, we we always portrayed the characters from Walt Disney movies, we went to all the movies with my dad and we would always have those costumes for Halloween so that was a big influence. But, then surprisingly I would say that when I was in college Malcolm X was the biggest influence. I, the watts riots to place during my second year in college and of course I was familiar with Martin Luther King which is the peaceful side of the civil rights movement. But after the watts riots I started being a little more curious about what would happen if Martin Luther King wasn't successful, what's the alternative to the peaceful approach. So I started reading black authors like James Baldwin was actually my favorite. And then Malcolm X was part of that because I really wanted to understand what was their thinking and what what was behind this all that anger this was so he was influential.

**Natalie Cremeans: As you may recall, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated Nov. 22, 1963. Do you remember where you were when you heard the news and what was the biggest impact on you and your friends?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** I do remember, I was actually selling donuts, I was the editor of our school paper and we had to, we had a special edition coming out for thanksgiving and and so we had to raise some extra money to pay for that special edition, so I was sitting outside our dining hall selling donuts and the announcement came over the loudspeaker in the high school and I think that the biggest effect it had on us was that we started to feel vulnerable. You think if the president can be killed anyone could be killed. You sorta feel like that whole predictability about life is kind of losing its center and so I think there was a lot of you know it was so chaotic because the men of course Oswald was then shot and it just seemed like this whole like the logic of the universe was kind of destroyed. So it just made people feel vulnerable like you know anything can happen.

**Natalie Cremeans: Speaking of vulnerability, for much of the 1960s the Cold War between the United States and the Soviets raged. Do you recall feeling unduly anxious during this period as if a third world war could start?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** Yeah and again now looking back and you see oh that didn't happen, but we didn't know that wasn't going to happen and so that we actually had those famous drills where you would get under your desk and put your hands over your head like that would protect you from a nuclear bomb. So yeah everybody was on edge and and kind of scared most of the time

**Brad Kiers: To your knowledge, did Lee College regulate the personal music of students during the 1960s?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** Yes Yes haha. It was partly regulated at the beginning. You weren't supposed to be listening to anything besides Christian music, classical music or whatever. Later, maybe the rules were changed a little bit but students regulated each other. I remember this one incident that was quite hilarious. Students rally wanted to have a jukebox in the dining hall and finally they got one. Students saved up all their quarters and starting playing rock music in the hall and half of the student body thought it was a sin to listen to rock music. So they protested and in this day there was a huge argument

in the dining hall about music. So eventually, they took the jukebox out. It wasn't there for more than 24 hours.

**Ashley Rice: The Civil Rights movement was a major part of the 1960s and Martin Luther King Jr. is seen as a key player in the movement. What do you most remember about Martin Luther King Jr.?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** Well, I actually remember hearing the "I Have A Dream" speech for the first time when it was [on] being broadcast on T.V. And I know it's hard, it's so much iconic in part of our culture now it's hard [for] to remember. It was new. And I just remember how strongly he brought religious values to bear on justice and equality and passive resistance. So, I thought he was a wonderful, kind of amazing, role model. But at the same time, in the moment, he was hugely controversial and many people didn't like him and many people spoke against him. People tried to bring up all kinds of things about him, but I just remember him being this really amazingly articulate presence who's really able to take the African American experience and really just putting it to words. So, I love to hear his speeches.

**Ashley Rice: In 1965 the Voting Right Act passed and many African-Americans could now vote. What was the biggest impact on you from that?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** Well, again, I was in Arizona when all that originally happened, and since we hadn't had segregation in Arizona it was a little bit different for me. But when I came to [when I came to] Tennessee it was the beginning [it was really] the front-end of integration and all that turmoil was kind of still going on and there was still a lot of attitude about it. So, it was really kind of [it was really very] interesting to come to the South.

**Joany Maxwell: Hi. I'm Joany Maxwell and I have two questions for you. Would you tell us what the name "Vindagua" means?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** Oh! I actually know this one. It is. I think it's Dutch. And it means um, wind, it means window. Wind eye. And it it's from the scripture 'through glass darkly.' So it has to do with seeing through a glass darkly but it's actually spelled wrong. And it should be v-i-n-d-a-u-g-a instead of d-a-g-u-a. And so there were a couple of years when the Vindagua staff decided they wanted to spell it right so they changed it but then the next, after a couple of years they said no it just doesn't look right so they changed it back. And some people thought, and this does make sense, but some people thought that it meant wine from water. So "vin de agua" but it actually means "wind eye."

**Joany Maxwell: Well, since we are on the topic of the "Vindagua," I want to ask you specifically about the 1970 edition. The yearbook specifically celebrates Neil Armstrong's walk on the moon. Do you recall prayer meetings about this historic event and safety for the astronauts or gatherings that took place on campus?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** You know I really don't, um it happened in the summer uh after students were gone. And I don't really remember a lead up to it thinking about, about the safety of the astronauts I mean there were, there were people who thought it was all staged- who thought that it was fake. But I don't actually remember people actually praying for the safety of the astronauts now that you mentioned it it seems like it would've been a good idea.

**Elly Chaney:** In 1975, Lee College's enrollment was around 1,100 students. What is the biggest difference between 1975 and today, where Lee University's enrollment is more than 5,000 students?

**Dr. Dirksen:** I think that the biggest difference is that with a bigger student population— of course, the obvious thing would be that we offer more programs and have more diverse faculty and better facilities and all those things that go into larger student body. But I think, from the student perspective, I think that the biggest difference is, when you only have 1,100 students, it's really easy to be marginal; it's really easy to be the only one of your kind, to be, I don't know, the only female basketball player, or the only whatever. And so, with 5,000 students, you can usually find someone else who's kind of like you. So you may not be the only person from Utah, or you may not be the only one who likes to dye their hair red, and you can talk to them. I think that that is the biggest change. More diversity because there are different kinds of people to get together with.

**Elly Chaney:** Unemployment reached 9% in the United States in the 1970s. Did employees of Lee College lose benefits? Was anyone furloughed?

**Dr. Dirksen:** We actually didn't have as much of a problem financially in the '70's as we did in the early '80's. Also, as part of that economic problem in the '70's, a lot of students would be in school four days a week; we didn't have school on Friday. Another thing at Lee was that utilities became really expensive, and so we had class in buildings that weren't heated. For example, I had my class in the laundry room of Nora Chambers because there was heat there and they didn't heat the classrooms every day. It's an interesting thing that the school did, but there wasn't as much of a change as far as jobs.

**Amy Greene:** Thank you, I'm Amy and I have two questions about President Nixon. As you know, on August 9, 1974 U.S. President Richard Nixon resigned leaving Vice President Gerald Ford to be sworn in as president. What is your most vivid memory about the Nixon scandal? And did this scandal shape your view of the United States government?

**Dr. Dirksen:** Yes, actually it did but I watched every minute of this on the news. I thought this was the most fascinating thing in the world. I didn't like Nixon so it didn't hurt me that he was being impeached and that all was, that all this was coming out about him. So, I thought the way it shaped my view of the American Government was that the processes in place actually do work. So, if you have a crooked president, he will be impeached. And so it kind of restored my faith actually that, that government could, could proceed and there would be a peaceful transition of power to the next person in line. And

so I have to say I kind of not enjoyed it, but I didn't think it was a disaster, I thought it was kind of a good thing.

**Amy Greene:** Another question as well, on January 11, 1973 the Supreme Court overturned all state laws that prohibited a woman's right to have an abortion while in her first trimester of pregnancy. Again, I have two questions. How has abortion, how was abortion viewed at this time by those in the Christian community, and do you think the majority view of Christians has changed?

**Dr. Dirksen:** I think that the, if anything, of course Christians have always been opposed to abortion, but I think it that the stringency of the feeling against it has kind of gotten harsher. So I think there was maybe in the beginning more of a sense of trying to provide more services for women who have to make this choice and so that they can keep the baby. And maybe built, built a little bit more around that. And I think, I mean it's always, I think Christians, at least evangelical Christians, have always been opposed to it, but I think the feeling has gotten a little stronger.

**Amy Greene :** The 1985 "Vindagua" yearbook shows female students in long dresses. Do you recall the dress code at Lee College during this period? And, would you tell us the biggest change in the dress code over the years?

**Dr. Dirksen:** Yes, the dress code from the time I came here, really I don't remember when it changed for women, but they had to wear dresses, women had to wear dresses and we had a regime of residence directors who would, would check the length of skirts so you if you knelt down on the ground your skirt had to touch the ground. So maxi skirts were kind of a, a fashion statement at that time, so people who were apprehensive about their skirts being too, about their skirts being too short, or being busted because their skirts were too short just wore long skirts, why not. But women weren't allowed to wear pants on campus or anywhere else. You weren't allowed to wear pants anywhere. So if you wore a pair of jeans to the grocery store and someone saw you, you could get demerits for that whether you were on campus or not. Because the idea was well it's a sin to wear pants, so it doesn't matter where you are it's still a sin so you get demerits for it. But then, I don't really understand their rationale, but they passed this rule that you could wear pants after five. So that was kind of you know, giving the battle away. If you wear pants after five, then you're really admitting that it's not a sin so why can't you wear them any old time. So then eventually, eventually women were allowed to wear, to wear pants on campus.

**Nicole Quince:** My name is Nicole and I have a few questions. Popular films tend to be a challenge for Christians. In your opinion, how did the college respond to the films of the 1980s that students recall as iconic? I'm thinking of "E.T." in 1982, "The Breakfast Club" in 1985 and "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" in 1986.

**Dr. Dirksen:** Well interesting because we weren't allowed to go to movies back then there wasn't a lot of discussion about it because all movies were seen as bad. The rule is if

you can't see them than discussion of them is bad, but of course every one saw them anyway. Sooner or later everybody saw them. I think that, well you think Lee is in a bubble now you should have saw it back then I think people felt a little abstracted from pop culture back then just because there was only so much that you could participate in so I think that discussion of those films were probably not as rich as it would be now.

**Nicole Quince: In the 1980s The New York Times ranked AIDS as a serious medical problem. Do you recall the reaction of Lee College to this health crisis?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** Yeah that was really before they figured out the cocktail to control that. It was a really really hard time. A lot of people knew a lot of people that were dying. It seemed like an epidemic that you just couldn't get your arms around and you know of course there was the usual disdain for people who were either homosexual or IV drug users and that kind of blaming people for their own sickness. There was also some fear that people weren't exactly sure how it was transmitted so people would be afraid to go to a restaurant where there might be some LGBT waiter or you know. . . there is kind of a recoiling from the wider culture because of that fear of not knowing how exactly it gets transmitted.

**Nicole Quince: On March 30, 1981 U.S. President Ronald Reagan was nearly assassinated by John W. Hinckley Jr. Do you recall where you were when you heard the news and what the biggest reaction your students had to the news?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** Well, unfortunately I have a funny story about that. I. Murl is my husband; he also teaches at Lee and he came rushing in and said "Someone came in and tried to assassinate the president" and I said "Doctor Conn?!" and he said "No the president of the United States." So I do remember the incident and again I guess because we lived through Kennedy's assassination this seemed serious and yet he wasn't actually killed we kind of recovered from it. The nation kind of recovered from it pretty quickly.

**Brianne Schapira: Hi Dr. Dirksen, um I'm Brianne and I have a couple questions I'd like to ask. In 1980, the summer Olympic games were held in Moscow. More than 60 countries boycotted including the United States. To your knowledge, did anyone protest in Cleveland or on campus at Lee? And, what was the general sentiment on campus about the Moscow Olympics?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** I don't think anybody protested. Um Lee students haven't been very big on protest. But um I think the general feeling was that it was an overreaction in that all those people had been training for years and years and years to compete in the Olympics and now they weren't going to get to. So that was a big disappointment in that you know, we couldn't watch the Olympics. But I was actually in Guatemala that summer and so I actually watched the Olympics ah on T.V. in Guatemala. Ah but ah it was really ah you know really different not having America be competing.

**Brianne Schapira: So, the Iran-Iraq War is recorded to have formally begun on September 22, 1980. What is your most outstanding memory from this episode?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** I actually had a son in law who was deployed in that on that day, so I actually had ah kind of an investment in that in the beginning of that war. And it's just one of those things that he came back OK, but he you know nobody comes back from a war really OK. And so you've always got some level of PTSD I think if you're really in battle. So that was kind of a big deal.

**Brianne Schapira: So, how has been able to overcome that?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** Well he stayed in the military until he retired. Um you know you can retire fairly young from the military. And they they um they gave him treatment, and so he he's OK.

**Brianne Schapira: That's good to hear. So, the Berlin Wall fell on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1989. Do you recall where you were and how you might have felt when the wall came down? And then um also, how about your students? What did they say?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** I was actually giving a speech at a conference, and so I was away from home. And um watching it watching it on T.V. in a hotel and so it was it was a huge moment. And I um I think the idea of it's hard to even imagine now, but but a wall separating a European city just seems inconceivable now. And so just the sense of ah, you know of course I had known people who had tried to cross and people who had been able to go to East Germany to kind of see it and the big discrepancy in style of living and level of life in the two sides of the wall, um was really kind of amazing and so when you actually see that. And people were actually on the wall tearing it down so it was kind of like enough's enough. And they just um just took on whatever might happen to them after all those years and just brought it down. So it was it was an amazing thing. And you know, my students, I think that it's a little bit hard to ah, I think it was hard for them to realize what a significant event this was. I'm sure in retrospect they were able to, but I think it was hard for them to really grasp the significance of it at the time.

**Connor Adams: My name is Connor Adams, and this is part two of an In-depth interview with Dr. Carolyn Dirksen. Dr. Dirksen I have a couple questions for you today. According to your vita, you visited Russia and did some teaching over there. I would like to know, what impacted you the most from this experience?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** I was in Russia in the 90's, so it was not so long after the break-up of the Soviet Union. I guess what impressed me most was how dire their situation was actually. I grew up during the cold war and I always imagined Russia being a superpower that was you know probably at least advanced as the U.S. maybe more so in some ways, and I was really quite shocked that a lot of consumer products and a lot of things that make our lives easier were unheard of there. So, that balance was really a shock for me.

**Connor Adams: I'd like to know, how did your time over there shape your work here at Lee?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** We were starting to develop the TESOL program, and so any experience in teaching english to speakers of other languages outside the U.S. gives you perspective I think that helps to maybe round out those kinds of programs.

**Rachael Crowe: As you may recall, Atkins Ellis Hall burned in 1993? Did that disaster cause Lee University to lose students?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** No one actually died in that fire. There were three people who were injured rather seriously and some of them were in the hospital for a very long extended period of time so that was a tragedy, but considering the fact that there were seventy six people in the building when it caught on fire, it was immediately engulfed in flames, and the fire escapes were on fire- they were like barbecue grills so people had to actually jump out their windows, the fact that no lives were lost was actually quite a huge miracle. It in a strange way it ended up having a positive impact on campus because it's one of those things that really brings people together. The guys who were in the dorm really lost everything. They didn't have clothes or driver's licenses, they didn't have passports or shoes. Everybody just kind of came together and made sure they had what they needed. Even including books. They even lost their books [and] homework.

**Tori Medlin: My name's Tori Medlin and I want to ask you kind of a different question, what was your first job?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** Well, a very interesting first job. I was a typist for a radio station, which doesn't sound very interesting, but if there was ever a reason for the DJs not to be there then I got to be a DJ. So, I had a, an off and on radio program that I got to do. And I had to learn how to do all the technical things of setting all the dials and all that sort of thing as well.

**Bethany Silverman: During Y2K, the computers were all supposed to crash. Did you or Lee University make any memorial preparations for the Y2K in 2000?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** It was very interesting. We didn't actually, at Lee University we didn't. There were however some very outspoken individuals on the faculty who just thought that the world was going to an end. And so, they were hoarding water and all the kinds of things that you read about, but the institution didn't really do anything. I think Dr. Conn was convinced that it wasn't going to be a disaster.

**Katherine Burney: That was Bethany Silverman that asked that last question and I'm Katherine Burney and I would like to ask you in 1995 football star O.J. Simpson was tried for the murders of his ex-wife Nicole Brown-Simpson**

**and her friend, Ron Goldman. How do you recall the reaction of the Lee community to the news that he was found not guilty and how did you respond?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** Well, to be honest, you talk about the “Lee bubble” and the “Lee bubble” it kind of insulates Lee’s faculty and students from the outside world. So it’s not, I mean it was a big deal, but I don’t think that students necessarily had a strong reaction to it one way or the other. It was big news because it was movies stars and football stars and so on, but as far as really having an impact on campus it kind of didn’t just the way news doesn’t when you are a student.

**Katherine Burney: Alright, the second question is in political news of 1998, U.S. President Bill Clinton became the second president ever to be impeached. So did the Lee community react to this and, how did you respond, personally?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** Well, of course, I think like anything, anything that brings the importance of the presidency or compromises the role of the president is unfortunate, so of course, I was not happy with what happened and again, I think the Lee community probably, I mean it was talked about, but it really wasn’t seen to be a big thing.

**Lindsey Sotuyo: My name is Lindsey Sotuyo and I am going to ask you two questions. The United States is still reeling from the Sept. 11, 2001 attack. Do you recall where you were when you heard the news and what was the reaction of the Lee campus?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** Okay, now, that was a huge, there was huge reaction to that. I was actually in my office, in the administration building, and my office neighbor across the hall came over and said, “Oh a plane has run into one of the twin towers.” And so I was trying to get this on TV and so I could see it and so, but because everybody was looking for the same thing the Internet was all full and crowded and everything was crashing. And so I went out to try and find a TV to watch it on, on campus, to see what was happening. So I went around to all the places where there are flat screens but none of them were tuned to that yet. So I actually ended up in Dr. Conn’s office, and so we watched it. Stephanie, Dr. Conn, and I watched it together. Now I think the reaction on campus was really quite huge. We had a, we had, people came back to campus at night, and we had sessions for students in the dining hall and in the dorms, just to talk about it and to get their feelings out. And we had, we televised the National prayer service in the Dixon Center and sorta filled the Dixon Center up with kids, who wanted to watch it. So it was kinda huge. And actually the second tower fell right before chapel and it was a Tuesday or Thursday morning right before chapel. Minutes before. So Dr. Conn and I were in his office watching and then we went straight to chapel. And then the Conn Center was completely full, everybody was there, and it was completely silent. Nobody was saying anything. You know, it’s usually a big hubbub, before chapel starts, but it was completely silent. And then so we had chapel and of course you can’t not talk about. So Loran Livingston was a guest speaker that day and he kinda brought the message and just tried to be a pastor to the students who were there.



**Julia Minucci:** My name is Julia Minucci and I have two separate questions for you. My first question is: In August 2005 Hurricane Katrina devastated South Louisiana. How did the Lee community respond? What did you find to be the biggest surprise to that event?

**Dr. Dirksen:** We had a huge response again from Lee. I went down with a group of Lee students the next weekend and Mike Hayes and some students from Student Leadership Council went down and we worked with a church that was just outside the area that had been hit and so they had a big truck and we went in and served meals on the street for people and we worked in a church that had been converted into a food bank and distributed food. One of the things that struck me about it was how adkock it was - a delivery truck would come drop off food at a grocery store but the grocery store didn't exist anymore do they'd bring their food to us and just unload this grocery truck. And he had, it looked like a giant wok - and figure out what would go together and serve a meal, serve it to people who came by. And it was really the great leveler because rich people didn't have food and poor people didn't have food; people would come by in a big fancy car but they didn't have food so they were coming in for free food like everyone else and some people, obviously had done this before or were used to the whole food bank concept, of free food but it was really an interesting time and then Lee students went down every weekend, then spring break we all went back down again and it was a little bit more restored but we worked in the city park and we served meals to people that were dealing with the hazardous materials that were in the city park.

**Julia Minucci:** My second question is: In July 2005, terrorists attacked London's mass transit system. Did you worry that the United States would be next?

**Dr. Dirksen:** I didn't, just because I'm not a big worrier. I think Europe is a more logical place for terrorists because the US is so far away and of course we've had several terror attacks since then - what do I know - but as far as setting up a feeling of vulnerability that just didn't happen.

**Jessica Oliver:** I have two questions for you. I am curious to know how the fashion of men and women have changed over the last decade at Lee University. What is the biggest change in women's fashion?

**Dr. Dirksen:** Well, actually I think it's kind of a big picture thing and that is I don't think women dress up as much as they used to. It used to be, more than 10 years ago, when women had to wear dresses to class, it was like a fashion show everyday. It still to a certain extent except it's much more casual. So, I think that guys always shlumped around in torn jeans and all that sort of thing, but women have been much more sophisticated in their dress and much more consciences about dress and I think it's just all gotten more casual.

**Jessica Oliver:** And taking a different turn, Lee University continues to grow in enrollment and infrastructure. How is it that this campus continues to

**grow when other liberal art colleges haven't? And what do you think is different about our campus as a whole?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** Well, I don't want to sound like a broken record and say this thing that most everyone says [the most obvious thing], but we have had a very remarkable president for thirty years and that really gives you a foundation that you can't get if you have a lot of turnover. I've been here long enough to have served under five presidents. One of them served as president for 12 years and one of them for 30 years, so I've been here a long time. The others were very short tenure. And you can't build that momentum and you can't have a transformation in the institution if you don't have long-term leadership. And that leadership has to be pretty smart and pretty committed and have a good grasp of the whole situation in it that a college like ours fits into, which is the community, the educational higher-ed community, and the church community. And kind of figuring out how all that works together. Then, throwing in on top of that, some people who might have many to help support you. So, not everybody has those skills.

**Amy Lewis: In June 2015 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that same-sex couples can be married. What was the reaction from the Lee community? What was your reaction?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** Um ya know what, it sparked what um what is a kind of healthy debate. And that is what does it mean to be married? What is marriage? And what is it what is the attitude and what should the attitude be towards people who have same sex attractions? So what are their options? So, it did start a conversation at Lee, but i think it was, i think it's been and continues to be an intelligent conversation that's couched in, "what's the theology of that for us?" and "what is the nature of it?" I think really it's opened up for the conversation that is 'don't ask, don't tell' to be quoting about it.

**Amy Lewis: On November 16, 2015, a video was released from ISIS revealing the beheading of several US citizens? How, if at all, did that affect the feeling of safety on campus?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** I'm not sure that that one event impacted the feeling of safety. I think maybe the shootings at University of Virginia might have been more crucial. We came to know that a campus is a target rich environment, that is we don't have walls we don't have borders. You don't have to do anything to come on campus, and we value that openness and freedom, but I think students started to see that that also makes us vulnerable. So maybe not the beheading, maybe not the ISIS beheading as much as just campus shootings. I think did make students feel more vulnerable

**Kiersten Powers: I'm Kiersten and I have two questions for you. My first question is: With Republican Donald J. Trump running for president in 2016, how do you feel his immigration laws will affect the students who come to Lee University?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** Well, of course, my belief is that he will not be the president. I may be a minority in this region in thinking that. If he did become president, of course the

president doesn't make immigration law, so I think it would take a long time depending on the composition of the congress. They haven't been very productive in passing laws recently, so I think that would take a long time. However, there are regulations within the laws about immigration that could make it very hard for students to come. And it just can be a matter of embassies don't give visas. So if you just stop giving visas to students from designated countries, then there's nothing you can do about it. But we have that problem already. So people think the borders are so porous but we actually have this past summer for example, we had a class, from our extension program in Ecuador that needed to come on campus for a class. He needed to do one class on campus. And out of about 25 of them, only about half of them got visas. Which, these are our students, and how can they not get visas to come take a class on our campus. But they didn't. So it's already, i think it's already an issue for international students.

**Kiersten Powers: Right, right. My second question is: Allow me to go back a bit and ask you about 2012 and the Sandy Hook incident in Connecticut. While this tragedy affected schools across the nation, how were you personally affected as an administrator on a school campus?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** Well, as I was saying, I think that any time there's a shooting like that in a school, regardless of the level, it does make you realize that a school is a target rich environment that is very permeable to people from the outside that can come in with bad intent. And i think that if you can shoot a bunch of kindergarteners, you can just do anything. Anything can happen.

**Tori Vest: My name is Victoria Vest and I have two questions for you as well. According to WKRN-TV News Channel 2, in September of last year, there was a bomb threat on Lee's campus that affected a big event and the security of campus temporarily. Some critics have said that Lee University didn't handle the situation in the most effective or the efficient way. What would you say to that?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** My personal opinion is that it was well handled. You have to decide what level you're going to respond to any kind of threat. And it seemed to, I mean I wasn't, I wasn't on the administration at that point, so I don't know all of the conversations that went on behind closed doors. But I know that we attempt to keep life normal for people at Lee and protect them as much as we can without saying, 'Oh my gosh you guys should be scared to death because something horrible could happen'. So security is heightened and a lot more police were on campus. But as far as keeping, it was dorm wars. So as far as cancelling dorm wars and telling everybody to stay in the dorms, it didn't seem like a really productive thing to do.

**Tori Vest: My second question is, considering your career at Lee, what will your peers most remember about your work? And also your students?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** Well, I would be surprised if my peers remembered anything. What I, the contribution I hope to, well I don't even care if I'm remembered for it, but the contributions I am most proud of, one is: working on the development of the global

perspectives requirements, and I really love the fact that I don't know anybody who doesn't have a passport and our kids go everywhere. And sometimes it's a students first time on a plane, and they're going to Thailand or Cambodia or.. I love the fact that our students have this experience. So I worked really hard to get that implemented into the curriculum. And to get it stabilized so that it would be a lasting part of the curriculum. And the other thing is service learning. So that's the other thing that I worked on really hard that I'm glad everybody has to do.

**Chloe Johnson: My name is Chloe Johnson, I will be asking the final two questions. The first one is kind of strange, but what would you like to be on your tombstone? "On my my tombstone?" Yeah.**

**Dr. Dirksen:** I guess, I don't know exactly how I would want this worded for my tombstone. I would to be, I would like for my legacy to be that I was a good member of my family. A good mother, a good daughter, a good wife and everything else is just icing on the cake.

**Chloe Johnson: My final question is just, is there anything else you would like for us to know?**

**Dr. Dirksen:** I think you probably know this, I think you're coming of age, in a time that's blessed. You have a lot of opportunities, a lot of gifts; especially young women that haven't always been open. This is a good place to do that, it's a good place to come of age it's a good place to test your faith, and come to understand it as your own, it's a good place to learn your career, it's a good place to get your feet under you before you go out in the world.

**Chloe Johnson: Well, thank you so much on behalf of all of us and thank you so much with spend so much time with us.**

## Appendix II: Interview Pictures



LINDSEY SOTUYO WITH DR. SMITH



AMY GREENE INTERVIEWING DR. DIRKSEN



VIDEO CONTROL ROOM



BRIANNE SCHAPIRA INTERVIEWING DR. DIRKSEN



VIDEO CONTROL ROOM

**Appendix III: Interview Video Access Information**

Interview video attached and catalogued in the William G. Squire Library on the campus of Lee University.